

White Frese HB5740

Good morning Senator Gerratana, Representative Johnson, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Jesse White-Fresé and I am the Executive Director of the Connecticut Association of School Based Health Centers (CASBHC). I am testifying today on Bill 5740, *An Act Concerning Uniform Standards and the Provision of Mental Health Services at School-Based Health Centers*. This bill addresses two key areas: 1) a uniform design and make-up for school-based health centers that include mental health services and 2) a mechanism for the school nurse and the school-based health center to work collaboratively.

- The 75 School Based Health Centers (SBHCs) funded by the Department of Public Health have standards that are defined in the contracts between the sponsoring organizations and DPH. The standards for a School Based Health Center require a comprehensive model of care that includes both primary care medical services and mental health services, provided in accordance with nationally recognized standards for pediatric medical and behavioral health care. SBHCs already provide medical and behavioral health care in the 75 school sites
- Per the contract with the Department of Public Health, the district Superintendent is required to provide a letter stating that School Based Health Centers *will not supplant existing school medical and mental health services*. This has been a contract requirement since the inception of the SBHC program in the late 1980's. School nurses, school social workers, and school guidance counselors provide valuable services to all the students enrolled in the school. This is a key provision - students must be enrolled in the SBHC with written parental permission because primary care services are provided - services that are different than those provided by school nursing personnel
- SBHCs are required to employ licensed medical practitioners that can diagnose, assess, and treat illness and injuries. Nurse practitioners and physician's assistants have advanced degrees, advanced training, and expertise in child and adolescent health. The level of care they provide is a complement to school nursing services but should not replace the essential services provided by the school nurse
- In the last legislative session, a provision was passed into law (PA 12-1 § 96) that requires each SBHC that receives operational funding from DPH to enter into an agreement with the local Board of Education to establish minimum standards for the frequency and content of communications between the SBHC and the school nurse. The statute that defines and requires this written collaboration is already in place.

We thank you for your support of School Based Health Centers, and welcome any questions you may have. Thank you.